



Half Crazy

May 2025
Issue No. 15

The Newsletter of the Seated Half Society

1853-O No Arrows and Rays



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1853-O No Arrows and Rays PCGS-8



Liberty Seated Collectors Club

Uniting collectors of Liberty Seated coinage since 1973



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The Newsletter of the
Seated Half Society

May 2025, Issue #15

Current Membership - 39



1853-O Arrows/Rays PCGS-61

Seated Half Society has 39 Members

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SHS President's Letter

Dennis Fortier, SHS President

You may have noticed that we just welcomed our 39th member to the SHS recently. Who will be number 40 I wonder? Hopefully it won't be long in finding out.

As I stated in February, this year we will look into the lesser Seated Half collectors; the Type collector. For good or ill the nineteenth century type collector is a force to be reckoned with. In this issue we look at the 1853 Arrows and Rays half dollar, this one year issue is much sought after by type collectors as well as the series collector for its unique design. I kept the theme of the rare No Arrows/Rays on page one, using one of the VG-8 coins this time.

Some of you may have recognized the article on the 1855/1854 by Bill Bugert and myself in the most recent issue of the Gobrecht Journal from an issue of Half Crazy. Bill and I decided it needed a larger audience so non SHS members could also benefit from it. This is the first article to go from Half Crazy to the LSCC's premier publication the Gobrecht Journal. An SHS milestone. The omission of Bill Bugert's name on the article heading was an editorial decision that I was not aware of until publication.

John Dannreuther is coming out with his book on silver Proof's, which includes Liberty Seated half dollars. John granted me an interview you won't find anywhere else on the new book.

SHS Vice-President Verne Pitman continued and expanded his analysis of the Farmer Brown collection in the March issue of the E-Gobrecht. April is the beginning of Baseball season; and that is the theme of the April issue of the E-Gobrecht. So I was asked to write something on the 1841-O Baseball Die Crack. I re-print it here for those who may have missed it. And hey, it got some love from Coin World Magazine, how about that!

Dennis Fortier
SHS President

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Again, if you believe you qualify for membership, please contact Verne Pitman or myself to schedule an audit of your collection. All LSCC members who qualify are welcome. We hope you will join our association and become a member of the Seated Half Society.

Dennis Fortier, SHS President
ricajun@msn.com

Verne Pitman SHS Vice-President
vwpitman@gmail.com

Also, see the club By-laws and Audit information, on the club webpage
<http://lscweb.org/SHS-homepage.shtml>



SHS Shirts



At the recent FUN show an SHS member asked about ordering an SHS shirt. It has been awhile since we ordered shirts. Several members have qualified for membership in the mean time, and have not had the opportunity to order a shirt.

So I have contacted our supplier and have arranged for another order to be placed. I erg you to send a check to me personally (the SHS does not have a bank account) as soon as you can. Another opportunity to get one of these sharp looking shirts will not be had for several years. **Checks must be received by May 1.**

The deadline is now past. I have one order, I will hold it open till May 8th. This is your last opportunity, order now or miss out. Email me (ricajun@msn.com) and then get the check in the mail.

Send your check, size, and address for **\$40 (S to XL), \$42 (2XL and up)** to:

Dennis Fortier
215 Pomeroy Dr
Crossville TN 38558
Make check out to **Dennis Fortier**



Featured Variety -1853 Arrows and Rays



1853 PCGS-63 Arrows and Rays

The 1853 and 1853-O Arrows and Rays is a one year type coin. The design type was made in response to the California gold rush. The amount of gold coming out of the California gold fields effected the price of silver, bringing it above the face value of silver coinage. Shrewd opportunists took advantage of this situation and melted lots of recently minted coins.

The result of this was a lack of coinage in circulation. Congress and the Mint turn like a battleship. It took until 1853 for a reduction in the silver content of coinage to stop the melting and return coinage to circulation. The Arrows and Rays were placed on the coins to tell the public that the silver had been reduced on this coin.

Today, for type collectors this one year type coin is a must have. It is also popular with collectors for the Rays reverse. For series collectors this common date has a price well above its rarity. The 1853-O is a bit more scarce then the very common 1853 P-mint.

Some quick research on the internet says *"it was judged the arrows served the purpose of announcing the silver content reduction so the Rays were not used in 1854 and 1855."* After that the Arrows were also dropped.



Can You Identify This Die Variety (challenge)



One member answered the question from the last issue of Half Crazy correctly, this is the 1843-O WB-15. Here's this issues stumper!





Information Wanted!

By Bill Bugert

I am currently compiling information on examples of the 1849 WB-6 Dramatically Doubled Date and 1873 No Arrows Open 3 (both varieties) half dollars and am **seeking your assistance**. If you own either of these varieties and wish information on them included in my to-be-published Registers (similar to my 1878-S Register), please contact me at wb8cpy@earthlink.net. I am specifically looking for pedigree information, prices paid, and photographs. Please help!

To date and considering possible duplicate entries, I can account for approximately 38 different 1849 DDDs and 66 different 1873 NAOP3 half dollars. I believe there are others.

Date photos of these two major varieties are depicted below and detailed information is included in my books.





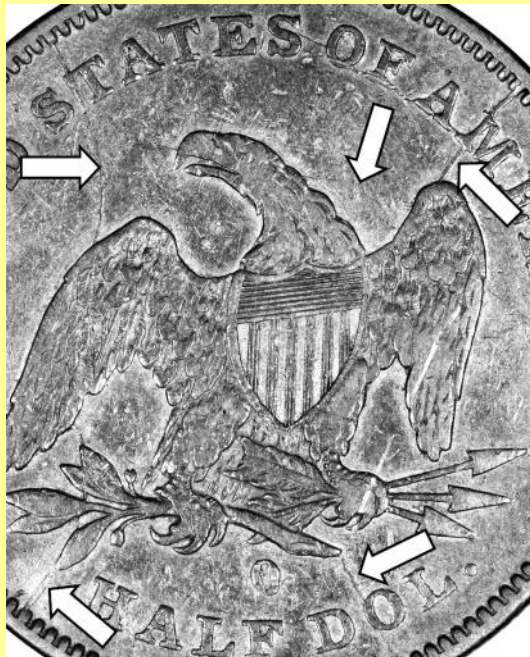
The 1841-O Baseball Die Crack Reverse Half dollar

There are three things that make a variety popular. The first is that it is an “eyeball variety”, meaning you can see it without using a loupe. Another is a really cool variety name. The third, that isn’t always the case, is rarity. When you have the first two and the third you really have something that collectors (even those that don’t normally collect varieties) go for.

This month we are connecting the dots between coins and baseball, so the 1841-O Liberty Seated Half Dollar Baseball Die Crack (BBDC) is a natural fit. In the first paragraph we discussed what makes a popular variety. Well, the 1841-O BBDC hits it out of the park (pardon the pun) in all categories. You might say it’s a grand slam. Sorry, I couldn’t help myself.

Wildly popular with half dollar enthusiasts, its rarity validates its eyeball appeal and name recognition. To make this variety more exciting there is a first die marriage and a remarriage! Together they are a collective Rarity 5 (31-75 est total extent).

Okay, so for the uninitiated, why the fancy name? Very simply the die crack on the reverse of WB-2 resembles the unique stitching on a baseball.





1841-O Baseball Die Crack Reverse (Cont)

As I stated in the third paragraph there is a first marriage and a remarriage. In the Liberty Seated series remarriages are scarce but not exactly rare. There was always a small chance after the first pairing the coiner could grab the same two dies to make more coins after one or more of the dies had been used in between. The trick for our great Liberty Seated numismatists is noticing the die progression, or deterioration.



Foot support WB-2 and WB-2R (Remarriage)

The 1841-O WB-2 Baseball die crack has a medium size mintmark. The key diagnostic for the remarriage is the weak foot support under Liberty's foot. The 1841-O is a better date overall with a mintage of just 401,000. For further details see Bill Bugert's *A Register of Liberty Seated Half Dollar Die Varieties, Volume III, New Orleans Branch Mint, 1840-O to 1853-O NA*. All Photos courtesy of Bill Bugert

1841-O BBDC P-15 CAC WB-2





E-Gobrecht and Seated Halves Make Coin World

The April 28, 2025 issue of Coin World magazine, Page 10, highlights the article on the 1841-O Baseball Die Crack in the April issue of the E-Gobrecht newsletter. This is some good press for the LSCC, the E-Gobrecht, and Liberty Seated coinage.

The article focused on the 1841-O having a first and a second die marriage.

The second marriage is Pictured here. WB-2R





Feature Article

An Interview with John Dannreuther

John Dannreuther is getting ready to publish the third in his series of classic American Proofs. A two book set on classic American silver Proofs. He has a number of articles planned in the coming months. He graciously accepted my request for an interview to bring out some background on his lifelong study of classic Proofs. Here is that interview.

Dennis: JD thanks for taking the time to talk to me about your up coming book and your passion for Proof coinage.

JD: Dennis I'm glad to talk to about Proofs.

Dennis: What started you on Proof research?

JD: I started this project 40 years ago in the 70's and 80's. I realized the Mint was using a different technique starting in the 1830's and 1840's. They were using mother dies with the 183 already punched into them on the reeded edge halves. The date placement was the same. We also discovered that they used the same reverse dies on Liberty Seated Dollars coins for multiple years in the 1840's. This made me think that the same might be the case for other denominations. We soon found that it was indeed the case. I was sitting with Harry Bass in 1982 when I discovered the 1846 quarter eagle Proof had the same reverse as the 1841. In the 1990's I went to the Smithsonian where they had all the 1840's gold (quarter eagles, half eagles, eagles, and double eagles) . The 1840 through 1848 all had the same reverses (in each of their respective denominations).

In 2001 I was able to look at the Phil Coughlin collection. The half dimes, dimes, quarters, half dollars, and dollar Proofs. I was able to prove the same was true for all the silver denominations. It was about that time I decided to write a series of books on classic Proofs (1790's to 1916). The Gold was first (2018) because it had the fewest number of die varieties. Nickel came next in 2023. The silver book will be two volumes, the three cent silvers through quarters in volume one, halves and dollars in volume two.

Dennis: When is the two volume silver set coming out?

JD: I hope to have it at the ANA this summer, if the printer can deliver the books in time.

Dennis: Bill Bugert told me there are about 150 pages on Liberty Seated Half Dollar Proofs is that correct?

JD: That sounds about right.

Dennis: Tell me about your background?

JD: I started out as all of us did. My father was a collector/dealer. I sold my collection when I went to college. Then my father developed macular degeneration.



An Interview with John Dannreuther (cont)

JD: He (my father) could no longer see his coins so he asked me to sell them. I got married and had to make a decision on how I was to make a living. I had a knack for coins so I became a full time dealer.

In the early 1980's I met Gordon Wrubel, Bruce Amspacher, and David Hall. The four of us got together and wrote some books. That developed into a grading service (PCGS).

Dennis: How many Liberty Seated Half Dollar Proof die varieties are there?

JD: I'd say about 100, give or take. Kevin Flynn gave me some destruction documents from the Mint. These documents sometimes showed there were more than one Proof die destroyed. In 1882, for instance, there were three die varieties. It took me a while but now I can identify each of them by sight. One has the date going up to the right, one is level, and the other has the date doing down to the right.

Dennis: Can you give me a brief history of Proof coinage production and sale?

JD: Well, prior to 1860 Proof coinage production was very limited. In 1860 they (the Mint) started putting a surcharge on Proofs. Prior to that Proofs were sold at face value, so there was no downside to buying Proofs. Also, starting in 1860 you could only buy half dollars in Proof sets. They charged \$3.00 on \$1.94 face value. Today that is not a lot of money, back then it was.

The Mint sold the small denominations in sets of the 1 cent, 3 cent, 5 cent, for .13 cents. That was much more affordable. The small denominations have Proof mintages of up to 6,000, while most half dollar Proof mintages are under 1,000.

Dennis: What happened to the unsold Proof stock? Were they melted?

JD: No, John Fletcher Roberts a British researcher got the archives to send him all the documents from 1887-1888 and he found the term "returned to circulation." The left over Proofs were carried on the books at face value until sold, a regular accounting practice. John Frost found a letter instructing the chief coiner NOT to melt the Proofs (in 1877).

Dennis: Did you reference any famous collections in your book?

JD: Yes, I referenced Koffman, Gardner, Elisburg, and Brand collections. I also list buyers that Heritage and other don't list because I was at the auctions.

Dennis: Do you list any Branch Mint Proofs?

JD: Yes, but only the ones we know for sure are Proofs. The 1844-O half dollar is a new one that popped up about two years ago. We know it's a Proof because it matches the five and ten dollar 1844-O Proofs out of the Parmley 1890 sale. They are not as highly polished as Philadelphia Proofs, there's lots of lap dishing or polish around the edges.



An Interview with John Dannreuther (cont)



1844-O Proof Liberty Seated Half Dollar Photo Courtesy of PCGS

Doug Winter believes an entire Proof set (1844-O) was made for President Tyler's visit to New Orleans, something we have not been able to verify.

Dennis: What are some of the challenges of collecting Liberty Seated Half Dollar Proofs?

JD: Well, the 1840's and 1850's are super low mintages. Starting in 1859 the mintages are more reasonable. Certainly a Proof set from 1859 through 1891 is doable. Whether anyone will want to do a die variety set of Proofs from 1859 on is another story.

Dennis: Do you have a teaser for our half dollar enthusiasts?

JD: A teaser no, but we do have that transitional issue from 1877 that was in the Gobrecht journal a while back. That was an interesting discovery. I have to credit Craig Sholley on that one. If you remember, we believe the closed bud was not intentional. Part of the hub broke off.

Dennis: Yes I read that article with great interest. I've been chasing circulation strikes of the various open and closed buds for years. Well JD thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me. I wish you every success with the new book and look forward to seeing it.

JD: Thanks Dennis, have a good day.



All photos unless otherwise stated are from Heritage coin auctions

(100 points needed for membership in the Seated Half Society, see our webpage for details)

<http://lscweb.org/SHS-homepage.shtml>

Request for Content

Any publication is only as good as the content it receives from its members. Articles, stories and photos are always welcome and encouraged! Please submit to the SHS Editor, Dennis Fortier at: ricajun@msn.com

Again, if you believe you qualify for membership, please contact Verne Pitman or myself to schedule an audit of your collection. All who qualify are welcome! We hope you will join our association and become a founding member of the Seated Half Society.

Dennis Fortier
SHS President
ricajun@msn.com

Verne Pitman
Vice-President
vwpitman@gmail.com